



## Solidarity for Ukraine – issue 22 – The bat strategy

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The Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (iriv) is associated to the international solidarity for Ukraine attacked by Russia on 24th February 2022. After a pandemic that has weakened democratic countries with the disturbing rise of conspiracy theories and hate speech on social networks, we do hope this war in Europe will be an opportunity to reflect on a new solidarity, among European and international allies. This issue is the 12th for 2023 and the 22nd since the beginning of the war in Ukraine... «Die Fledermaus», the Bat in French, is the third operetta by Johann Strauss. It takes place in Vienna, a night of celebration, and tells the revenge of Dr Falke against his friend Gabriel von Eisenstein who forced him to return from a masked ball to return in his costume of bat (1). Viennese farce, it can also embody human duality. In

a first point, we will evoke the facets of the bat that can disconcert- is it bird, is it mouse? In the following points, we will evoke the Russian and Ukrainian situations from this ambiguity, the bat causing both fear and attraction can illustrate the contrasting personalities of the Russian and Ukrainian presidents. One thing is for sure, in diplomacy, ambiguity is always a threat.

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\* le logo a été dessiné par Caritas Canada en février 2022

## The disconcerting facets of the bat

The bat is an ambiguous animal, we do not know what to expect. It gave its name to a strategy that evokes a double game «I am a bird, see my feathers; I am a mouse, see my hair». In this way, people who play “on all sides” or situations that can lead to confusion by giving the curious impression of not knowing where they are going or what message they want to deliver. They create a cognitive dissonance that disrupts the brain and maintains a stress that is always detrimental to neurons.

The inability of the bat to choose or specialize, can be an asset in the 21st century, symbolizing a form of versatility increasingly sought after. The knowledge learned at school or university is quickly obsolete when you enter the job market. With the progress of artificial intelligence, symbolized by ChatGPT (2), jobs characterized by repetitive tasks will disappear (accounting, secretarial, translation, etc.). To continue to exist in front of the machine, the human being must develop his/her creativity and inventiveness. This creative skill is part of the «soft skills» or transversal skills, in high demand, in all domains, not only in the artistic professions. The bat did not choose, it was born different. It can symbolize this creativity that has a more social declination and can translate into an ability to adapt- it can be bird or mouse depending on the situation. A «bat» profile can easily transfer the different experiences acquired in a long and rich career of bird and mouse. Its strangeness and its difference can disturb and even sometimes lose its interlocutors, but it makes think the most curious who will have known to go beyond appearances. It is not very pretty and can even arouse disgust or fright in sensitive souls; its singularity will attract the most discerning.

Let's imagine that we mobilized, several years, all our energy and resources, to strive to be convincing for a plan that was important to us. Doubts appear after a few years in the face of a series of disappointing events and emissaries whose reactions convinced us that they were not on the same page. This heavy and repeated incomprehension is a source of intense stress that can provoke eruptive and excessive reactions, not very constructive, and detrimental to one's mental health. After a necessary work on oneself, understanding that one has made false track, and that one has doubtless deluded oneself, it would be useless to fuel an anger which succeeded an equally excessive enthusiasm. Without abandoning the idea that we had and that is still dear to us, we can transform this experience into something else, we sublimate it (in a psychoanalytical approach). New ideas appear while walking if you are a mouse, flying when you are a bird.

This strange animal perfectly symbolizes the duality that exists in every human being- the mouse is down to earth; the bird allows flights. These two qualities must be combined to move forward. The pragmatic side is less exciting but just as necessary as the heights to lead one's boat to the right port. These contradictory facets are perfectly embodied by the Russian and Ukrainian presidents.

## On the Russian side, a bat at the Prater

The personality and diplomacy of Vladimir Putin would be perfectly illustrated by a short, animated film where we would see the Russian president dressed in bald Mouse taking the Ferris wheel at the Prater with the mixed feelings of terror and disbelief that this character could arouse in the viewer. The mythical Viennese Ferris wheel, immortalized in many post-war films, could be changed into a roller coaster with the current process of image manipulation, which would add to the strangeness of the scene.

The Prater is the ideal place to set the scene because it evokes a troubled period of European history just after the Second World War when Vienna, the Austrian capital (annexed by the Third Reich during the Anschluss) is divided into four zones - Allied (American, English and French) and Soviet-dominated (Eastern part). The war against Nazi Germany gave way to a new “cold” war – the western camp (USA and Europe mainly, members of NATO) against the USSR and the bloc of “popular democracies” (Warsaw Treaty). A war of position, with peripheral conflicts (in Asia with Korea or Vietnam, in Africa and Latin America), where everything can be played- hopes in the climbs immediately scalded in the descents. The bat arouses fear because it has long been associated with the devil in the Middle Ages. It was nailed to the doors of houses in the countryside to ward off the «bad luck» or the «evil eye».

The Prater had its glory days. It was a full-fledged actor in one of the most prominent spy films “The Third Man” based on a short story by Graham Greene, one of the British writers belonging to the very peculiar and unique caste of spy writers (3). Since the French Revolution, modern amusement parks are the heirs of the «leisure parks» which brought a change of mindset and a new way of life with new and unprecedented distractions (4) where all social classes could mingle. Although inspired by sledge races held in Saint Petersburg since the 16th century, the «roller coaster» was actually created in Paris in 1804. They are one of the most popular attractions with their famous «looping» which creates strong emotions, most disturbing, combining artificial exaltation and real terror. The climb is full of promise, the slope is dizzying and creates an anxious feeling.

The Russian president is an ambiguous figure. He has a jovial and even friendly figure when he meets his friends, Chinese Xi Jinping or Syrian Bashar El Assad or Iranian Ebrahim Raisi. On the other hand, he is frankly odious and even brutal when he addresses his Western counterparts, for example during his speech in 2007 when he attacked the Western camp. He is worrying and full of innuendo when he receives the German chancellor with her Labrador at her feet, knowing that her counterpart fears dogs. The dizzying ascents and descents of his foreign policy are similar to the roller coaster. You never know which breathtaking descent awaits geopolitical experts after a dizzying rise of the master of the Kremlin who may not even know himself what bad move or «special operation» he will implement on a tormented and explosive international chessboard.

## On the Ukrainian side, the storytelling of Batman

A short, animated video of Volodymir Zelenski in the guise of Batman would successfully rally many young people to the Ukrainian cause and could usefully counter the massive Russian disinformation campaign that uses the terror and artifice of animations and video games.

The course and diplomacy of the Ukrainian president can be likened to the story of Batman, a fictional character and superhero from the DC Comics universe created in May 1939 by cartoonist Bob Kane and screenwriter Bill Finger (5). An ordinary man, Bruce Wayne, becomes a masked vigilante who acts mainly at night. It is recognizable by his costume consisting of a cape in the shape of wings of a bat and a mask with pointed ears. If he doesn't have superpowers, he has great dexterity in martial arts and his technological equipment is ultra-sophisticated with his famous Batmobile.

The figure of Batman perfectly fits to the man from Kiev because Bruce Wayne, unlike his rival and sidekick Superman, is a human without superpowers who faced a personal tragedy - the murder of his parents by a thief on a street in Gotham City. He decided to become a vigilante and fight crime. He practiced martial arts, boxing, while studying science. He chooses to become Batman when a bat enters the family mansion and terrorizes him. This «storytelling» perfectly illustrates the course of the Ukrainian president that nothing predestined an exceptional destiny. Constrained by the Russian attack, he decides to react, also transforms physically (no doubt combat sports or bodybuilding) and refuses fate by taking up arms.

Bruce Wayne is actually a billionaire owner of the Wayne Enterprises businesses inherited from his father. A philanthropist, he created the Wayne Foundation, which funds scientific research and supports victims of crime. Thanks to his involvement in his associations, he became mayor and then senator of Gotham City. In the Wayne Foundation building, hides the Batcave, its basement that hides all its Batman equipment. The resemblance between the Ukrainian president and the character of Batman is quite astounding- the same successful career of a businessman who tries, and succeeds, a political career to serve his fellow citizens. Volodymir Zelenski is only missing a Batmobile, after refusing the taxi the American president, Joe Biden, had suggested at the beginning of the conflict (to evoke an exfiltration by special forces of the US army).

Although often acting alone, Batman has allies, such as Robin (adopted son of Bruce Wayne), his lifelong butler, Alfred Pennyworth, who takes charge of his education upon the death of his parents or the police commissioner, James Gordon. Again, the figure of Batman fits to the personality of Volodymir Zelenski who is surrounded by close friends, safe people who will protect and defend him in threatening times. The Ukrainian president can count on the Western side, his many visits abroad (Washington, London, Warsaw, Paris, Rome, etc.) as well as the visits of special guests (representatives of the European Union ) are all pledges of conditional support from his Western allies.

## Ambiguity, a main source of cognitive dissonance

According to French personality Cardinal de Retz (6), ambiguity can only be overcome at one's expense. One can choose to change strategy when one realizes that one's strategy was vain and even counterproductive. English diplomacy left its mark in the days of its colonial empire (for instance in India) when the slogan was "*if you can't fight them, make friends of them.*" Rather than relentlessly trying to send a message that does not get across, it is better to consider another more convincing strategy.

Another strange being, this time imaginary, has raised many questions: the mermaid. Is it a fish or is it a female human being? One obviously wonders about its femininity (or sexuality), prevented, which allowed all possible interpretations, the most ordinary and the most basic. Psychiatrists and psychoanalysts (7) more original saw in the mermaid the symbol of a melancholic posture, which is called in psychoanalysis the oceanic feeling. Melancholic beings easily have adventurous behaviours (sometimes risky ones). They are very sensitive to positive or negative waves and challenge themselves to get out of their melancholy. Extraordinary experiences or tragic events that they were able to overcome allowed them to develop a very popular skill in the 21st century: «crazy skills». Theorized in the human resources department of high-tech of the Silicon Valley, an ultra-competitive sector, they make it possible to differentiate between «top level» candidates with already non-standard backgrounds.

In a threatening international geopolitics, bats and sirens bring a singularity and strangeness that can make a difference. These figures are not naive and do not lack lucidity; they need confidence and sincerity to be able to flourish. Yesterday's friends can become tomorrow's enemies, and vice versa. The camp of democracies is threatened, authoritarian regimes gain points. Public opinion even in the Western world doubts the virtues of democracy. Populist movements (political and religious ones) play on confusion and gain support that is measured by the exponential growth of hate messages, conspiracies, racists, anti-Semites, sexists, homophobes on social networks.... No minority is spared and becomes the privileged target of anonymous haters and malicious people who wait for the first pretext to let their resentment explode.

The war in Ukraine was a revealing, "stress test" for democracy. The mobilization of the Western camp (led by the United States and the European Union) was total in the face of the threat. NATO has regained its colours with new members (Finland and Sweden). Yet discordant voices have appeared in Europe (Hungary or Serbia allies of Russia) and the United States (supporters of Trump). Moral authorities are ambiguous (8). In the name of pacifism, they put the belligerents on the same plane – the aggressor and the assaulted. The responsibility always lies with the people who attacked first.

The diplomacy of the bat, which consists in not choosing and maintaining ambiguity is a real threat to democracy - not only in Ukraine.

- (1) Opera online downloaded on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2023- <https://www.opera-online.com/fr/items/works/die-fledermaus-haffner-strauss-ii-1874>
- (2) Artificial intelligence conversational agent, developed by OpenAI and specialized in dialogue - <https://chat.openai.com/auth/login>
- (3) Graham Greene (1947) « The Third Man », scenario published in 2011 by Collector's Library then London: MacMillan Collector's Library 2017
- (4) Recreation Park History and Information (Asterix Park Press Kit)- <https://parc-attraction.skyrock.com/362208776-Historique-et-informations-sur-les-parcs-de-loisirs.html>
- (5) Batman- <https://www.cosmopolitan.fr/batman,1998453.asp>
- (6) Cardinal de Retz - Jean-François Paul de Gondi, born 20 September 1613 in Montmirail and died 24 August 1679 in Paris, is a French statesman, churchman, and writer.
- (7) Serge Hefez « Transitions. Réinventer le genre » quoted by Valérie Robert, version Fémina, supplement to JDD, 21 May 2023
- (8) Anne-Marie Pelletier, doctor of Religious Sciences, recalls the ambiguous attitude of Pope Francis in the article « Depuis le début de la tragédie ukrainienne, le Vatican peine à nommer les choses avec justesse », published in Le Monde, Saturday 20 May 2023

## Useful contacts

We mean to share the following contacts

- 1- National Union of Journalists of Ukraine- [HTTPS://NUJU.ORG.UA/](https://nuju.org.ua/)
- 2- Ukrainian Parish of Saint Volodymyr –Paris – [paroisse.st.volodymyr@gmail.com](mailto:paroisse.st.volodymyr@gmail.com)
- 3- Catholic Mission of the Polish Church in France also suggests the following link:<https://mission-catholique-polonaise.pl/polska-we-francji/pere-brzys-la-mcp-lance-une-initiative-nationale-pour-aider-lukraine/>

A list of associations & ONG - **Source** : <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/actualites/A15542>

**Support Ukraine** — <https://www.supportukraine.co/>

**Croix-Rouge Française** - **Croix-Rouge française** Redcross - <https://www.croix-rouge.fr/Nos-actions/Action-internationale/Rechercher-un-programme/LA-CROIX-ROUGE-FRANCAISE-EN-UKRAINE>

**Médecins sans frontières** - emergency funds in countries bordering Ukraine and seeking to bring in medical equipment and personnel. - <https://soutenir.msf.fr/faire-un-don/~mon-don>

**Secours populaire** – a call for support .- <https://don.secourspopulaire.fr/ukraine/~mon-don>

**Protection civile** - un appel aux dons pour financer d'autres besoins (défibrillateurs, respirateurs, groupes électrogènes, etc.) : <https://don.protection-civile.org/soutenir>

**Fondation de France** - lance un [appel à la générosité](#) pour soutenir les centaines de milliers de personnes affectées par le conflit en Pologne et en Roumanie - <https://dons.fondationdefrance.org/solidarite-avec-les-ukrainiens/~mon-don?>

**Agence des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés** - situation d'urgence de niveau 3 pour la crise en Ukraine, le plus élevé.: <https://donner.unhcr.org/fr/fr-fr/urgence-ukraine? cv=1>

**Unicef** - un besoin urgent de financement pour répondre aux besoins essentiels des enfants Pour faire un [don sur le site Unicef.fr](#) - <https://don.unicef.fr/b/mon-don?cid=322& cv=1>

**ONG Care International** - un [formulaire en ligne de dons d'urgence à l'Ukraine](#) pour apporter une aide d'urgence aux populations et aux réfugiés - <https://soutenir.carefrance.org/>

**L'ONG française ACTED** organise des convois humanitaires pour l'Ukraine

**association Solidarités International** –pour envoyer des convois de vivres et biens de première nécessité, distribuer de l'eau et des repas aux réfugiés - <https://dons.solidarites.org/b/mon-don?cid=880& cv=1>

**Plan International**, pour apporter aide matérielle et psychosociale aux jeunes ukrainiens et à leur famille, et [sollicite des dons](https://formulaire.plan-international.fr/urgence-ukraine/~mon-don) pour ce faire.- <https://formulaire.plan-international.fr/urgence-ukraine/~mon-don>

**L'Aide médicale et caritative France-Ukraine** - envoi de convois d'aide humanitaire, des soins aux blessés, des échanges de savoir-faire médical, une aide psychologique et organise des colonies de vacances pour les enfants orphelins - HelloAsso - <https://www.helloasso.com/associations/aide%20medicale%20caritative%20france%20ukraine/collectes/aider-ukraine-amurgence-help-ukraine/don>

**Le Comité d'aide médicale Ukraine** - réfugiés en transit dans l'ouest du pays, et collecte fonds, médicaments et équipements pour l'hébergement et les soins via ses partenaires français, l'association SAFE et l'organisation FONDEMOS. - <http://www.cam-z.org/en/news/121/>

**JeVeuxAider.gouv.fr** est la plateforme publique du bénévolat, - une page dédiée Mobilisons-nous pour l'Ukraine .- <https://www.jeveuxaider.gouv.fr/engagement/benevolat-ukraine/>

**Les Banques alimentaires** - une aide d'urgence à apporter aux frontières de l'Ukraine, dans les pays frontaliers accueillant des réfugiés - <https://www.banquealimentaire.org/urgence-ukraine>

**La Protection Civile et l'Association des maires de France** ont établi une [liste](#) (lits de camps, sacs de couchage, lingettes, conserves, pansements hémostatiques, solutions antiseptiques ...).

**L'Association des maires de France** a dressé les [lieux de collecte](#) à travers toute la France. Les Maires de France appellent à la [solidarité avec l'Ukraine](#) . De nombreuses villes de France organisent des collectes de produits de première nécessité - <https://www.amf.asso.fr/documents-les-maires-france-appellent-la-solidarite-avec-lukraine/41122>

**La plateforme officielle** « [Je m'engage pour l'Ukraine](#) » lancée le 8 mars 2022 par le gouvernement pour accompagner les Français souhaitant héberger chez eux des Ukrainiens réfugiés et accueillis en France.- <https://parrainage.refugies.info/>

Les associations, fondations, entreprises et collectivités territoriales peuvent utiliser ce [formulaire en ligne](#) pour renseigner leur capacité d'hébergement.- <https://www.demarches-simplifiees.fr/commencer/hebergement-personne-morale-ukraine>

**Bibliothèque sans frontière (BSF)** - elle mobilise et déploie, partout en Europe, des solutions d'urgence pour l'accueil et l'intégration des populations réfugiées. - <https://www.bibliosansfrontieres.org/2022/10/14/bsf-lance-bonjour-france-une-application-innovante-dapprentissage-du-francais-pour-les-refugies-ukrainiens/>